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Your Life's Calling: getting unstuck and fulfilling your life lessons

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4: Common Limiting Beliefs

Logically speaking, it doesn't make any sense to hold onto limiting beliefs once we've recognized them, does it? If our logical mind were in control of our subconscious beliefs, our life would be very different. We would notice our negative thoughts or unwanted behaviors, determine that's not how we want to be, decide how we want to be, and voila, our life would change. That's how our logical mind would work.

However, our deeply held limiting beliefs are not ruled by our logical mind. While it's very true that most of our subconscious beliefs change and grow with us as we mature, some remain stuck in their original form. Remember this: *Most* of our childhood beliefs are updated throughout our life. So most of our beliefs do work for us. Only a minor number cause us grief. These are the mal-adaptive ones; they remain based on our childhood thinking.

One of the main reasons we hold onto these old beliefs is because, when formed, they were meant to help us. All beliefs are. Originally, we saw each one as a solution to a problem. Since many of our beliefs were formed before age seven, many were based on (1) being loved, accepted, and having a sense of belonging, or (2) feeling safe and secure. We all have these core needs, so beliefs tied to them tend to stay intact. In addition, if we formed a belief based on these core needs during a time of high emotion, these emotions continue to act as glue to keep that belief static.

So let's explore some common limiting beliefs, as well as some possible "positive intents" for why we originally formed these beliefs. See which beliefs strike a chord in you – either in a feeling, an emotion, a memory popping up, a shiver up your arms or your spine, a gasp, or the thought, "Oh my gosh, that's me," or "Wow, so that's where my belief came from," or "I don't feel so good right now, those words hurt."

- "I'm not enough"
- "There's something wrong with me"
- "I get abandoned"
- "Why did he (or she) reject me?"
- "I'm afraid"
- "I have to...I should...I can't...I don't want to"
- "I'm stuck"
- "I'm alone...I'm all on my own...I don't belong"

- “I’m afraid to speak up”
- “I don’t matter...I’m not worthy”
- “I can’t do it right”
- “I need to be in control”
- “I’ve been abused”
- “Life isn’t fair”
- “I’m powerless”

“I’m Not Enough”

As children, we all learned some aspects of being “not enough.” Variations of this belief are: I’m not good enough, not smart enough, not tall enough, not thin enough, not rich enough, not athletic enough, not coordinated enough, not attractive enough, and so on.

By the time you were a few years old, you were probably told by your parents, “No! Bad!” This isn’t in any way to blame your parents (or you as the parent). It’s just how life is with little children. The problem occurs when, as a young child, you believe it’s about you, rather than about your behavior. At a very young age, the feeling begins to form “I’m not good enough for Mommy or Daddy. There’s something lacking in me.”

At a very early age, most children learn that pleasing Mommy and Daddy and making them happy is what gets children love and keeps them feeling safe. Since love and safety are core needs, these beliefs and perceptions tend to become deeply ingrained in our subconscious.

Imagine you’re two years old and acting appropriately for a two-year-old, which may mean your mother is overwhelmed and feeling crazy. She’s saying (yelling) you are bad, what you’re doing isn’t good enough, and you should know better. You may take this in with all the emotion and charged energy of that moment, feeling as though the “I Am” that you are isn’t good enough. It’s not that your actions are bad. Rather, you believe that, to the very core of you, *You* are bad.

When the *I’m not good enough* shifts from something that you’re *doing* to who you *are* as an essence, your sense of self, your sense of worth, diminishes. Your vibrant child-light dims. If this message gets replayed and re-experienced often enough, it can feel as though your inner light gets completely covered over by this sense of “in the very core of my Being, I am not good enough.”

I’m not good enough is a lie, just as are all the other limiting beliefs.

It was never the truth, not even for a moment. Your actions as a child that led to being called bad were, most likely, age appropriate. They weren’t the actions of an adult; they were the actions of a child. Even if what you did was “bad,” no matter what it was (and, think about it, how bad can a little child actually be?), it was always about your behavior and never about You – the core and Soul of who you are. And yet that’s what you took it to mean: You, the very core of you, is bad. And that’s a lie.

You may also form this belief simply because you are a younger sibling. If you’re three years old and your siblings are five or seven or ten, you compare yourself to them. You see that you’re simply not at their skill level. Since “age-appropriate abilities” is not a concept you understand, you think you should be able to do whatever they can do. But since you can’t do as well as they can do, or keep up with them, then you generalize and tell yourself, “*I’m not as good as them. I can’t do it as well as anyone else.*”

A belief system not only includes a *thought*, such as *I’m not good enough*, but also accompanying physical sensations, which strengthen the thought’s power over you. When that belief is replayed, these

sensations rise up: You can feel your body shrink inward, your stomach contract, your head and shoulders hang down, your arms or legs shake, or other bodily reactions.

In addition, a belief system also includes the emotions and feelings we originally experienced in that moment, such as sadness, despondency, hopelessness, and a sense of no worth or value.

And that's not all! A belief system also includes the event and our age when that belief was programmed into our subconscious. All these elements intertwine, connect, and lock together, becoming one big limiting wall – walling us off from achieving our potential. Over time, this limiting wall can become so habitual that it becomes engrained in our body – we don't even realize it is fencing us in.

Here's an example. Let's say you're five years old playing kickball. You mess up and miss the ball. All the other kids laugh and make fun of you. In that moment, you can freeze for an instant and unconsciously record the entire event in your subconscious mind: five years old, humiliated, laughed at, not good enough, feel awful, just can't do anything right, others can do everything better than me. That entire moment in time becomes the basis for the belief system, *I'm not good enough* or *when I try and do something, I get humiliated* or *I'm no good at sports*.

In most cases, such an event is a moment in time and, within a short time, the emotional charge dissipates and the entire event dissolves away, leaving no long-term impact on your life. However, in some cases, such a simple event can get energetically stuck in your mind and become the basis for your self-concept. Over time, it takes on a life of its own, as it becomes the filter for how you see yourself and your place in the world.

From then on, when you make a mistake or a bad decision, or take some wrong action, this belief will get triggered in you – thereby reinforcing and “proving” to yourself that you are, indeed, not good enough. You will look at your life and see the huge pile of “evidence” that others are better than you. You will relive the consciousness of that kickball event thousands of times. And each time, you will feel as you did at age 5 – young and childish.

Why does this “evidence” pile up? Because when a belief is energetically charged, it becomes a magnet for situations with the same energetic charge (*I'm not good enough*) to occur over and over as you age. You literally send out the subconscious thought “*I'm not as good as others and I get humiliated,*” which draws to you circumstances where you perceive yourself as not as good as others. In fact, it may be that you truly aren't doing as well as others, so feeling embarrassed and humiliated seem justifiable. “See, I knew I couldn't do it!” could be your mantra. Over time, it becomes self-perpetuating as it occurs more and more often. It gets so that you then simply expect it to happen.

Most of our beliefs change and grow as we develop and mature. Thoughts and beliefs we had as children fall away naturally and don't cause any sort of stress or problems later on in life.

However, some beliefs do not change or grow. They stay suspended in time, stuck in the moment in which they were formed. It's like taking a photograph that captures a moment in time and never changes. These are the beliefs that cause us problems because they keep us living in the past, not the present. We forever reference the past for who we are today.

But know this: *All beliefs and thoughts can be released or transformed*, even if we took them on at birth or even in the womb. These beliefs are typically about survival. No surprise there. They formed early and deeply, even though we didn't yet have language. We experienced the event and that consciousness became engrained. I believe we add descriptive words later, when we gain language skills. So now, when we go back to the root cause of a belief from birth, the language has become part of that event. The brain has linked that early event, the feelings and emotions we experienced, our consciousness at that moment, and the words about what that meant.

The belief *I'm not good enough* is devastating to one's sense of well-being. When it gets triggered, our whole sense of self can collapse and the decisions we make become based on that poor sense of self. These decisions may not be very wise because they're actually made from our "child consciousness."

This destructive thinking/feeling underneath impedes our growth, as we become adults, striving to succeed and create a happy life for ourselves. No matter what we create externally for ourselves, this foundational consciousness and experience of being not good enough will show up in our actions.

The Positive Intent of "I'm Not Good Enough" may surprise you, given all the negative impacts just presented. Your belief systems were ALWAYS meant to help you! At the time they were formed, they were always meant to be a positive solution for what was occurring in your life. If they now create problems for you, it's because they are still in their childlike format and haven't been upgraded, or because they were never true to begin with. We hang onto outdated belief systems because they were originally meant to help us, and because we saw them as a solution.

Let's say when you were three years old you got the message from your mother that you were a "bad boy!" You didn't understand that it was your behavior that was upsetting her. You thought it was *You*. Thus, you formed two beliefs: *I'm bad* and *I'm not good enough*.

The common child's thinking goes like this: Being "bad" brings pain and feelings of not being loved. When Mommy is mad at me that means she doesn't love me. However, when I'm good, then I get Mommy to smile and she loves me. So I need to be good to get love. If I know I'm *not* good enough, then I'll *try harder* to be good enough.

The thought *I'm not good enough* is a reminder to be on the lookout for bad behavior and try harder to be good. That's the original positive intent of the belief: to be good and get Mommy's love and approval.

The problem is that *I'm not good enough* is not a pathway to being good enough. Until you release or change this belief, no matter how hard you try to be good, you will still have the belief *I'm not good enough*. Trying harder doesn't erase the underlying belief; it actually reinforces it. As you try harder, and actually do well and are rewarded with approval, the pathway for this belief gets stronger. In your reality, you really are not good enough, so you never let up trying harder to be better. It's a vicious circle, not a virtuous one.

The positive intent of *I'm not good enough* is to be good enough and therefore be accepted and loved, and to avoid the pain of being rejected and not loved. But this mindset doesn't work. All that *I'm not good enough* creates are feelings of shame and worthlessness. It can never, ever, bring feelings of love and approval. It's not a pathway to success even if it does force you to work harder and do better. You may succeed in the outer world, but at a high cost to your inner world, your sense of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-love.

"There's Something Wrong With Me"

A common belief closely linked to *I'm not good enough* is *There's something wrong with me*. This belief also has a profound negative impact on one's sense of worth. I know one woman who created this belief at the moment she was born, when she was held upside down and slapped. Rather than being held and loved, she was put aside into a bassinet away from her mother, who was under anesthesia. There was no bonding, no nursing, no moment of connection. It was a shocking and disruptive event for her. In that moment, she experienced sensations, emotions and energy in the way she was treated. As she grew and developed language, and replayed that original experience in her brain, she added the words *there's something wrong with me*.

During our first years of our life, we see ourselves as the cause of everything that happens outside of us. If someone acts in a certain way, we believe it's about us or because of us. We experience it through our infant perceptions and later we add the language.

This woman's thought ruled her life for 50 years because, when we have such a belief, we attract experiences that reinforce it. Over the years, she searched for what was wrong with her – through therapy, self-help books, and conferences. It was like an itch that she kept scratching. Sometimes, “scratching” make it worse. Sometimes the itch goes away for a while. But it is always there, underneath the façade of “everything's fine.” It's a sense of oneself that you can't get rid of.

Here's the thing: Her belief was never true to begin with! There wasn't anything wrong with that baby, or any other newborn. It was her perception of how she was treated. In truth, there was a lot wrong with the way babies born in the 1940-50s were treated. But a newborn doesn't know it was just the procedures the medical establishment was using at that time. There wasn't an emphasis on natural childbirth, or bonding, or nursing, or fathers being present at the birth. It wasn't *ever* about her, and yet, she suffered mental and emotional damage.

She was in yet another workshop about improving her life. This one was about core beliefs that we take on very early in life, often at birth or soon thereafter. The instructor helped the attendees uncover their core belief because we often cannot see the belief ourselves because it's been an integral part of our personality for as long as we can remember. When the instructor suggested *there's something wrong with me* was this woman's core belief, she described it as “a lightning bolt shot through me.” She unmistakably saw how that thought had ruled her life. In that sudden *aha* moment, she released that thought's life-long hold on her.

Once she released the belief, poof, it was gone. She then began to see all the ways it had affected her life: always searching for what was really wrong with her, so she could fix it. Now, whenever that thought meanders into her consciousness, she's immediately aware of it and knows it's not true. It holds no power over her. That consciousness no longer controls her sense of Self as it once did.

We are all subject to the effects of these childhood beliefs – until we change them. That's what self-help books are about: How to change our limiting subconscious beliefs and thereby change our life.

There's no rule that says we can't hold opposing beliefs in our subconscious mind. In fact, we have all sorts of variations of beliefs within us. Many of these beliefs relate to certain situations or relationships. For example, you may excel at work, being gifted and capable at what you do. You may manage others and do an excellent job of directing and leading your group to success. You don't have any thought of not being good enough at work.

But, at home – where you're a mother or father, husband or wife – you may show up as a very different person. You may appear to not do anything right. Your spouse may point out ways you are lacking. Or you may demonstrate poor parenting skills – losing your temper, yelling at the kids, unable to keep the household in order. At work, you think clearly and focus on the end result. At home, your mind gets cluttered and your plans for a happy family life disintegrate.

You wonder, what's wrong with me? How can I be two such different people – one so effective and one so overwhelmed? The reason is that you have subconscious beliefs specific to each role and relationship – and these beliefs can be diametrically opposed to each other.

If you find yourself being “two different people,” look at your beliefs in each situation. These beliefs are not difficult to find. They actually play out right in front of you, depending on the role you are playing. You may have trouble seeing the beliefs yourself, because they look and feel like the truth. If so, try pretending you are a neutral third party and stand back and look at your life.

The Positive Intent of "Something's Wrong With Me" was very similar to the previous *I'm not enough*. It was meant to help you find out what was wrong, fix it, and then be loved and accepted, or safe from being punished.

If you remember nothing else from this book, remember this: *You, the Soul of who you are, are Love. At your core, you are perfect.* We are all eternal souls who are temporarily here in human form. From the human viewpoint, we all have habits, behaviors and thoughts that are less-than- desirable, unacceptable, and some would even call mean. That's the human side of us.

When we die, we release the human form and return to our Higher Self, which is Love. Then we remember, "Ah yes, I am Love." Then you can remember, "There never was anything wrong with me. I just thought there was." It's better, however, for you to remember now, in your human form, so that you can learn what you came here to learn: It's all about Love.

"I Get Abandoned"

Abandonment – another common limiting belief – is the thought or feeling of being left, discarded, not cared for, or not supported emotionally, physically, or mentally. It's that sense of being alone in the world and needing to make it on your own because no one else is there for you.

Abandonment beliefs usually start in childhood, often very early, when you feel as though one or both of your parents simply are not there for you. Perhaps a parent leaves through a divorce or death, is simply away at work, or goes into a hospital for a short stay. All types of situations can cause children to perceive that someone has abandoned them, someone they expected to be there for them in a caring and supportive way.

This belief can also form in everyday situations. I once worked with a man in his forties who had the ongoing pattern of women leaving him. He saw himself as an abandoned lover. In going back to the root cause, he saw himself as a young boy about 3 or 4 years old in the grocery store with his mother. This was back in the 1950s when there were no fears of children being harmed or kidnapped. As his mother shopped, she walked around to the adjoining aisle, while he focused on something in his aisle. All of a sudden, he looked up and thought, "Where's my mother?" He immediately went into fear, panic, and shock. "She's gone!" In that moment, he took on the belief, "*Women leave me.*" It didn't matter that she was just in the next aisle. That moment of panic got etched into his subconscious, and then began to replay throughout his life.

With this strong, energized belief in his subconscious, he unconsciously attracted women who had a belief that fit his belief – like a hand and a glove. The women he brought into his life believed, *I need to leave before I get hurt*. What a match! They lived out their belief by leaving him, and he lived out his belief by feeling abandoned.

This scenario may seem too crazy to be true, but it is very, very true. Just think about it. Does it bring up any thoughts in your mind about any relationships you have had?

This is how simply beliefs can get formed and take on permanence. Over and over I've seen a limiting belief formed in one moment – and the situation is completely resolved a minute or two later – but that's too late. The belief has already been energized. For some reason, the little boy's limiting belief was not replaced by the truth that Mom was right there, and he was getting hugged within a minute. In many cases, the truth does not override or correct the misperception or reduce the intensity of the fear. That's when the limiting belief becomes a magnet for life, manifesting itself over and over.

Feeling abandoned causes a lot of heartache. So does believing you need to leave before you get hurt. My clients are often surprised, amazed, and then even angry to find out that the root cause of so much of

their pain and suffering has been caused by something so simple. To add salt to their wound, they find that their intense belief wasn't even true to begin with. They expected the root cause of their emotional pain to be something worthy, or traumatic, or horrible. They wanted to justify their belief of being abandoned or needing to leave. I have discovered that many people find it very difficult to accept that the root cause was just a moment in time. Even worse, it was just a child's misperception.

A common cause of feeling abandoned comes from being an infant in the crib, alone in the dark, crying for someone to come. When mother doesn't come to pick you up *in that moment*, you, the baby, feel alone, uncared for, and abandoned. If all these feelings get locked into your subconscious mind, and are not changed, your abandonment story begins.

If you're a parent and you're worried about the limiting beliefs your child may be forming, please know this: You *cannot* protect your children from forming limiting beliefs because you cannot begin to imagine what's going on in their head. What you can do is change your own limiting beliefs, so as not to pass these beliefs on to them. Furthermore, since we are all connected, by changing your own limiting beliefs, you help others change theirs.

If you suffer from this idea that you've been abandoned, and you really believe it's true, I'd like you to step back and realize something else: The *only thing* that is actually true is that you have a *belief* that you were abandoned. Your belief, thought, perception, feeling, and experiences of abandonment make this statement appear true to you. But that's not the truth.

In fact, even the cause of your belief was not necessarily true. That mother did not abandon her son in the store. She simply went into the next aisle. The other mother did not abandon the child in the crib. She came a few moments later and picked up her child.

Even if the three-year-old boy had truly been abandoned in the store, generalizing that experience to his being abandoned by women for the rest of his life was never an appropriate follow-on thought. His experience was a moment in time at age three. That's all. It was not the blueprint for how all women would treat him.

Consider the little girl crying to be picked up. Her mother was in the other room, and came to soothe her upset baby as soon as she could – just moments later. But that part of the story gets forgotten or ignored. Think about it. Of course your mother, or some other person, would pick you up when you were crying.

I had a client who, at age two, formed a similar belief during an adult party. Everyone was so high above this child, who was way down on the floor. She felt not seen and abandoned. So she cried and formed the beliefs, *I'm abandoned, no one cares about me*. It took some time in a session for her to realize the obvious: Of course she had been picked up. There was no way on earth that a crying child in the midst of adults was not going to be picked up. It's common sense. But when the belief is strong, common sense and the adult perspective are nowhere to be found. The believer doesn't even think to question the belief.

I'd like you to really take note of this: *Never ever are the thoughts or perceptions of a three-year-old valid for a person in their thirties, forties, fifties, or older!* They are appropriate for the child, and may be true at that age. But they are not appropriate or true for the adult because they are not adult thoughts. What you thought in childhood should not be running your life today.

So even if a parent had actually left the home and was gone from the child's daily life, that didn't mean that parent abandoned the child. It sure looked that way, didn't it? But what was actually true was that the parent left, or died, or moved. Or even more likely, the parent left for work for the day! This could be traumatic for a young child, even when siblings or a babysitter were still in the home. If he believed

I've been abandoned, he might even expand that belief to not trusting his parents to be there for him, or to fulfill his needs, because he'd begged them to stay, yet still they left for work.

People can also feel abandoned by God/the Universe. This, too, can begin even at the moment of birth when the shock of being born into a little physical body causes an infant to feel separate from the Oneness and Love it just left on a Soul level.

Imagine that's you. You, the Soul, know Oneness with Source and All That Is. It's the natural state of Being for all of us. Yet when you get into the body, the experience of being physically separated morphs into being spiritually separated, and thus alone. This is an existential feeling that most people have: the feeling of being Alone, separate from Source. For some, this then shifts into feeling abandoned by Source, left here on earth to make it on one's own.

In Reality, we are never separate from Source, although we may feel separated. To say you are separate from Source is like saying you are separate from air. You can't be separate from air. It moves in and through you, giving you life. Similarly, you can't be separate from the Essence of God/Source, because this essence is in every cell of your body. You are an expression of Source and therefore never separate, regardless of what it feels like to be in a human body. It's part of our journey to come to this realization that Source breathes us and we are One with All That Is. That is equally true for every person on planet Earth.

The Positive Intent of "I've Been Abandoned." So what might have been the positive intent of taking on beliefs such as *I'm all alone*, *There's no one here for me*, *I'm not supported*, or *I've been abandoned*? This is a common set of beliefs that leads to feeling isolated and abandoned, even when you're in a loving family or have strong friendships. You sense that you are alone in the world and you must make it on your own because no one else is there for you. What a tragic situation: You can have love all around you, yet you feel isolated.

Referring back to the story of the man in his forties who had the ongoing pattern of women in his life leaving him, he was always being abandoned in his love relationships. He was the child in the grocery story whose mother was in the next aisle when he suddenly thought, "*She's gone.*"

His experience of fear and panic was so intense that he immediately created a defense mechanism. While it all happened in the blink of an eye, when he was later under hypnosis, he was able to replay the experience and recognize his thinking at that time. It went along these lines: "I never want to experience this shock and surprise again. It's too terrible. But this is how life is: Mom Left Me! If I know that's what happens in life, then I won't be surprised next time, and I'll be able to handle it better. I never want to feel this same terrible feeling again."

The positive intent of his thinking was to never again feel the terrible shock and panic of realizing Mom has left him. So he guards himself against that happening by preparing for it by believing *women leave me*. The problem with his rationale, however, is that this belief has had the opposite effect of what he wants.

This often happens with our limiting beliefs: They end up becoming the cause of the problem we were trying to solve. Through time and misinterpretation, they become contaminated. This man has vibrated his energized belief that women leave him out into the world, which has drawn that circumstance into his life again and again. What he really has wanted is to protect himself against women leaving him. But the opposite has happened because each time a woman has left him, it has reinforced his belief, making it seem even truer, and also sending an even louder signal out to the universe.

When he released his habitual way of thinking about being left by women, he then found he needed to do inner work around his own behaviors in relationships, so that he wouldn't set up situations to encourage the woman to leave. He was then able to move into healthier, longer-term relationships.

“Why Did He (or She) Reject Me?”

Rejection is similar to abandonment – and often connected to it. Rejection can feel more personal than abandonment because a person, or persons, has rejected you personally, cast you aside. Once, they were there for you. Now, they've rejected you. If they tell you exactly why they don't want to be with you, they make their actions all about you, which can be painful, stabbing, traumatic, and dramatic.

If you feel rejected, go back and read the entire abandonment section; replace “abandonment” with your story of rejection. It will all fit because rejection is still based on your underlying beliefs about who you are and how others treat you. It's a story you tell yourself. You may even expect it to happen because it always has. You live out this reality.

How do you respond to direct attacks on your character? Do these character assassinations get inside your mind, cause chaos, and disrupt your thinking, your emotions, your self-concept, your self-worth, and your view of the world? Even though you know these debilitating thoughts about your character are not true, do you still accept them and live by them? That's very common, and you would likely reply, “Of course! That person I cared about is attacking me! How can I not take it personally?”

Yes, of course it can hurt, and you can feel it moving through your mind and body. You can experience different intensities of hurt: as a sting, as a stab to your heart, even as being tortured. The sensations can last for a short time, minutes or hours, days or weeks, or even years.

I worked with one client who remains angry, bitter, resentful, and revengeful twenty years after feeling rejected in a divorce. Can you imagine twenty years of toxic emotions running through your mind and body? It's more common than you think. Look at your own life. See if you can bring up hurts from childhood and feel strong emotions connected to those memories.

The Positive Intent of “Why Did He (or She) Reject Me” What on earth could have been the positive intent of this belief? You're going to find it's a very similar theme for many of these beliefs: self-protection. To the child, it comes down to this: “It's the unexpectedness of being rejected that causes me so much pain. If I know what to expect from life, I won't be surprised and it won't hurt so much. Since I know that I am going to be rejected, I can numb myself against future losses and hurts. I can reduce my pain by simply watching and waiting for it to happen. That's how I will protect myself.”

Of course, thinking this belief will protect you is not the truth. But it is the truth from the child's perspective, and it is that perception that continues on into adulthood.

What I have learned is this: Anything anyone says to you – especially in anger or in any strong emotion – is actually about them. It will also be about you in some way, but it is certainly about them. You have just hit one of their hot buttons and they explode. They spew out onto you the perceptions, beliefs, emotions they dislike in themselves. This is called projection.

The other side of the coin is just as true. Anytime you spew anger and venom onto someone else – saying it's all about them and what they've done and who they are – take a deep breath and realize it's really all your stuff, your projections, and your beliefs.

We are each a mirror for one another. When you say anything about another, it's as though you're looking into a mirror and saying all those things about yourself. This may not be obvious to you at first, but take a good look inside and you'll find it's true in some form or another. Rejection from another is about them. You rejecting another is all about you.

We all have options on how to respond to being rejected. In the moment, you can breathe through the experience, and notice how you're responding. Pay attention to what is being said to you and about you.

Then take a look at this criticism. Does it have any merit, truth, or partial truth? You can use the situation as a positive learning experience, rather than take it personally and get stuck on it for years.

There's truth in the old saying that when you point a finger at someone, you have three fingers pointing back at you. When you blame someone else, look to see how you are the same – and how much you really dislike that characteristic in yourself.

For instance, if you are calling someone rude, ignorant, and self-centered, in that moment, look to see if you are being rude (passing judgment), ignorant (not knowing all the facts as the other person sees them), and self-centered (looking from only your own point of view).

One of the best books to help you see this clearly is by don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*. It's been around since 1997 and is a classic on helping people understand not to take anything personally, as we all think and act from our own wounds and beliefs.

I recently watched a segment of a talk show in which one of the hosts talked about being on a conference call. She called in early and was surprised to hear the other three people were already on the call. They were not aware that she had joined in the call and they continued talking – about her. She listened in as they honestly – and rather brutally – talked about her looks, her abilities, and her talent. She took notes on everything they were saying. “How often do you get a chance to really hear what others feel about you?” Rather than reject them or feel victimized by what she heard, she used their remarks as feedback. She made the decision to not work with these people, but rather to pursue her own path. That decision led her to eventually become a host on a popular talk show – her real calling in life.

So if someone is rejecting or blaming you, don't discount everything that person is saying. Look to see where there's some truth. Taking on all their energy and venom is not your only choice. You can choose to *not* take it on; rather, see it in its true light. That person is hurting inside and they are projecting their pain onto you. Perhaps you hurt them. If so, look at your own behaviors. You can learn how you affect others by listening to their reactions. Regardless of who did what to whom, you have a choice of ways to listen and respond. Use it to your benefit.

“I'm Afraid”

Fear will always show up when we are moving into new territory in our life. It's a natural part of our growth. Fear lets us know that we are at the edge of our comfort zone. It will show up as we continue to push our boundaries into new areas of experimentation, success, and achievement.

So, while fear is natural, there's one very big problem....

Most of our fears are not adult-based fears, nor are they based on what is actually happening in our life now. They are our childhood fears being replayed and replayed. Everyone has fears formed in childhood. You could be three years old and hear your parents fighting in the middle of the night. You get terrified and hide under your covers, staying very still, closing out the sounds of their loud voices. That entire event can be programmed into your subconscious mind and become your blueprint for how to stay safe. It was your truth in that moment: *I'm safe hiding under these covers staying absolutely still and quiet*. The terror feels so big within you, and you know there's nothing you can do to make them stop fighting, or to bring peace into the household. The fear can feel bigger than you, overwhelming you, and you feel powerless.

What terrifies you, this child, is the thought that the parents will stop liking each other and one or both of them will leave – and then what will happen to you? Who will take care of you? Ultimately, these thoughts lead to *I'm going to die!* That feels very real to a child. *I'm going to die because there's no one to take care of me!*

Such highly charged emotions and thoughts are readily programmed into the mind – where they may stay for years, or decades. Anytime fear feels bigger than you, or overwhelming, or if it's gone beyond fear into terror, know that you are replaying a childhood fear. It's not a current fear. It's an old habitual fear. It's not the truth. Just because your fear *feels* real doesn't mean it *is* the truth. Plain and simple, it is not the truth.

All of this experience can replay throughout your life, making you terrified of moving out from under the covers and into new experiences. You will fall back into this old habitual fear over and over again. And each time, the fear can feel stronger and bigger within you, keeping you frozen from moving into new experiences in your life. You can't breathe, you can't think straight, and your whole world seems to be falling apart. It has become very real and very physical. This is not just in your mind. At this point, you doubt and question yourself. Underneath it all is the subconscious (or perhaps conscious) thinking, *"If I do this (move, change jobs, begin a new relationship, start a business), I won't survive, I'll fail, I won't have enough money, I'm powerless to make it happen...I'll die."*

Fear keeps us stuck from moving ahead by taking us out into a future and "making up what might happen." We totally make up all the things that can go wrong, even though they may be legitimate possibilities. Then we believe what we just made up as though it were actually going to happen! We give meaning to our world through the stories we make up in our minds.

Let me say this again because it's what we typically do: We make up a story about what might happen (bad things) and then we believe that story (we make it feel real and true) and take actions based on what we made up (don't do anything, stay stuck). We make our story "real," and then act upon it.

There are endless possibilities that could occur in the future. Our real future depends largely on our actions, our consciousness, and our intentions – as well as factors that are completely out of our control and, as yet, completely unknown.

If you're going to make up fearful stories about what bad might happen – call it the "Big What If" – then at least do yourself the courtesy of making up a positive "Big What If," and feel it just as intensely. *Both* scenarios are possibilities. Acknowledge that! You can begin to de-energize your fearful stories by countering them just as quickly and powerfully with positive stories. As you move out of the belief systems that create your fear, you'll find that using your mind to create positive scenarios is far more helpful, creative, and life enhancing.

I'm in a coaching program with a wonderful and very capable woman, Felicia Searcy, www.feliciasearcy.com, who has been mentored by Mary Morrissey, also an amazing woman who has walked through the fires of life and now is teaching people how to live their dreams.

During a coaching call with Felicia, I had an *aha* moment about "what if." In our homework, we had written down our five biggest fears. During the call, I looked at my homework and realized that four of my five fears started with "what if ..." and then some terrible outcome. I had never consciously realized how that "what if" was such a big part of my fear thinking.

Felicia gave me a few alternatives to "stare down" my what-if fears:

- One, as described above, list your 5 top fears.
- Two, do some positive what-if scenarios – and feel them vividly.
- Three, an even more powerful tactic, which Felicia learned in her own life: in the face of your greatest fear, tell yourself, "If that happens, my God and I will handle it."

Isn't that an absolutely amazing response to your greatest fear? And isn't it the truth! Somehow, you have already walked through some fires of life. Somehow, you have handled everything in your life

because you are still alive. True, some of life hasn't been graceful or positive, but somehow you have handled it and learned to grow stronger and more resilient.

"My God and I will handle it." Those words can diminish any fear and any story you may tell yourself, if you will just believe the words and live them when you most need them.

The Positive Intent of "I'm Afraid" was to keep you safe. If you were afraid, you wouldn't do anything and then you wouldn't get hurt. It's usually that simple. But, today, if it's still there, in your subconscious, it's not keeping you safe. It's keeping you from moving forward.

"I Have To...I Should...I Can't...I Don't Want To"

How deadening it is to have your days run by the constant nagging thoughts of *I have to, I should, I can't, or I don't want to*. These beliefs control the lives of far too many people. Are you one of those who lives by your "to do" list, which always includes much more than you could possibly do in a day? At the end of the day, do you think, "*Ohhh, I didn't finish everything I needed to*"? As you're starting one errand, do you suddenly decide you should squeeze in three more? Are you always behind in what you want to accomplish? Even when you do finish a project, are you only thinking about the next five things on your list? Or, are you the opposite? Do you procrastinate, putting off doing what you need to do, ending up accomplishing next to nothing at the end of the day?

If these questions resonate with you, then your life is controlled by such beliefs as:

- "I'm always having to play catch up."
- "I absolutely must do one more thing."
- "There are so many demands on my time that I feel overwhelmed."
- "I never seem to be doing what I need/want to do."
- "Time is never on my side. There's never enough time."

You might think this way of living isn't really based on a belief system because it's your actual life experience. Yes, this can be your daily experience. However, you live this way because in your subconscious are beliefs that you have to, you should, etc.

I've had numerous clients with these beliefs whose typical root cause was based in having to do chores as a child. Using hypnosis to go back to this root cause, these clients had the same experience: *I have to do this...and it's boring or hard...and it takes forever, and I want to go out and play, but I can't*. This pattern became entrenched in their subconscious mind as "*this is how life is*." Every day or week the house had to be cleaned, the lawn mowed, meals cooked, homework done, pets fed, younger siblings watched, and so on. This mindset has been repeated ever since.

As adults, these clients have "chores" (errands, work projects, children's needs, social obligations, etc.), that take forever (every day there's more to do, never ending), and they can't have fun until it's all done (no time to enjoy their days or evenings because of the guilt and stress of all that *needs* to be done first).

Can you see that it's the same pattern as in childhood? I call it the "cookie cutter" effect. The pattern in childhood creates a cookie cutter, and then each cookie is cut from that mold and looks exactly the same. You recreate the same pattern throughout your life. And yes, you have many things to do in your life and it's all necessary, and so on.

Here's the thing to remember: Your life is the way it is now because you are repeating the patterns from childhood with your thinking.

I have a good friend who was always running around frantically in the morning trying to get to work on time. Invariably, she was stressed and not feeling particularly good about herself by the time she arrived at work. So I suggested she begin to “play” with time, to find out for herself how her perceptions and use of time were an illusion and based on her beliefs. So she began to tell herself the affirmation, “I have all the time I need in the morning, including time for a cup of tea.”

She did this for several weeks and then reported back to me, “I don’t know quite how this works, but now I have time for myself in the mornings. I didn’t consciously change my routine, except that now I sit down and enjoy a cup of tea before going off to work.”

External situations are not causing you stress. The real stresses come from your out-of-date thinking about life. You feel disempowered (like a child who has no choice but to do the chores), or overwhelmed (it’s too much for a child to do or it’s actually work the parent should do), or thinking you have to be perfect (you, the child, get in trouble if the house isn’t cleaned to mother’s demanding standards).

If you procrastinate, think back to when you were a child. Did you get things done or try to put them off? Many times procrastination is also linked to not wanting to do chores or homework, so you went and did something else much more fun.

The Positive Intent of “I Have To...I Should...I Can’t...I Don’t Want To” was to get you to behave in a way that would gain you love, approval, safety, or security. By knowing *I have to*, or *I should*, do something, then you would do it, perhaps saving yourself from being punished.

On the other hand, *I can’t* and *I don’t want to* enabled the child to have a voice in his or her life. Rather than being ruled by an adult world, the child began to say what he or she would or would not do. Autonomy, which is having a say in one’s life or being self-governing, is a basic need that everyone has. As part of child development, this desire to say “NO!” gets very strong in two-year-olds. Have you noticed that?

“I’m Stuck”

I often have clients come to me and simply state their issue as: *I’m stuck. I can’t move forward in my life.* This can be rooted in childhood beliefs of: *I’m not smart enough* or *I’m not as smart as the others* or *I can’t do anything right.*

One client had older brothers who would tell him what to do, so he would wait for them to give him instructions. He was three years old and in charge of guarding the candy he and his older brothers had put in their fort. He got bored and left the fort. When some neighborhood kids came and stole the candy, his brothers blamed him and beat him up. From that childhood event, he formed the beliefs, *I can’t do anything right. I need to have them tell me what to do.*

As an adult, he was still waiting for others to tell him what to do in his career. He hadn’t moved up in his field, although he was quite capable and had years of experience. He was afraid to be the boss because his childhood habit of following his brothers to school and to sports became programmed into his subconscious as: *This is how life is: I follow others and do what they tell me to do.*

At the time I worked with him, he had been unemployed for over a year, feeling stuck.

In going back to the root cause of being stuck, he went back to a memory at four years of age when he followed his older brothers out to play, but they went on ahead of him. He stood at a fence, afraid to cross the street and afraid to go back home. Staying at the fence felt safe. That pattern of being afraid to move forward because it didn’t feel safe was still active in him decades later.

After releasing several similar limiting beliefs during a session, along with the energy and emotions attached to them, he moved ahead in his life and got a job in his chosen field of work. His beliefs that had controlled his thinking and behaviors for over 40 years dissolved in just one hour.

As another example, when a child does poorly in school, or doesn't get a perfect grade or report card, the results can be devastating. The child can feel it deeply, scared they've disappointed their parents or their teacher, or afraid the other kids in school will find out. This fear can translate into adult fear of failure. They believe they're not going to succeed because they don't know enough, so they settle for jobs that are not fulfilling. They're afraid to step up to a new job because they "won't know what they're doing" in that new job. This fear is the child's elementary school experience replaying in their mind, telling them to hold back because it's not worth the pain of being rejected or failing in that new job.

The fear *I don't know enough* even rises up strongly in them when they just *think* about stepping out of the job they dislike and moving into another job or starting their own business. Their desire to move on is strong, but their fear is stronger. It's enough to keep them stuck for years on end.

The Positive Intent of "I'm Stuck" was often safety and/or acceptance. In families where there was chaos or a lot of disruption, a child often learned to be very still, shrink back, hide, or just be quiet to become invisible in order to feel safe.

Children with these beliefs often hold themselves back, thinking: *Don't speak up*, or *Don't be in charge*, or *Don't move ahead because I may be wrong*. They often think that other kids won't like them if they're smarter or achieve more, so they don't do any homework or don't turn it in on time. Their desire to be part of their peer group overshadows their inner drive to succeed.

"I'm Alone...I'm All On My Own...I Don't Belong"

It rather amazes me how many clients form the belief *I'm on my own, there's no one here for me* in early childhood, sometimes by the time they're three or four. They can feel all grown up at this early age, as though they're capable of taking care of themselves – which, of course, is not true. Children who form this belief can actually think they are alone, absolutely believing there's no parent or adult anywhere around to take care of them.

This belief can form from one moment in time when the parent is in another room, or the child wakes up in the middle of the night and feels alone. That deep feeling of being alone gets recorded, along with the consequence of *so that means I'm on my own* – even though nothing could be further from the truth. Obviously, young children are never in charge of their own care, no matter what they believe. But this feeling of being alone and having to do everything all on their own can become a theme in their life.

As adults, they can be happily married to a supportive spouse, and yet still feel alone and having to do "it" (that is, "life") all by themselves. Or, they can go the other direction and actually remain alone or single, perhaps as a single parent. They are playing out the belief *It's all up to me*, raising their children, providing housing, and making decisions on their own. Even when surrounded by friends and loved ones, they can feel alone, isolated, repeating that momentary feeling they had as a young child.

Clients who feel as though they don't belong – a kindred limiting belief – often go back to elementary school days as the root cause of that belief. They didn't fit in at school, they wore different clothes than the other kids, they moved and so were "the new kid" part way through the school year, or they were younger than siblings, and so felt left out. However it began, that feeling has stayed with them into adulthood.

When one client changed that belief, he reported back that he could feel a difference. He was at a social gathering, and even though he was standing back and watching, he didn't feel isolated or alone as he had

in the past. His behavior of staying “outside the action” remained pretty much the same, but inside himself, he now felt part of the group, which was quite different for him. He said the old feeling of being alone simply wasn’t there any more.

The Positive Intent of “I’m Alone” was also about survival. Children who took on the limiting belief *I’m all alone* did so for a good reason (at the time): They did it when they believed that surviving was all up to them. In their perception, a safe adult was not available to them, so they took on that role by themselves, or so they thought. This was ALL in the child’s mind. There was an adult present, even if they were not being a reliable parent. Four-year-olds CANNOT take care of themselves even if that’s their thinking. But by taking on this type of belief, they felt safe inside and believed they would survive on their own.

“I Can’t Speak Up”

Learning to speak up in the face of fear can be terrifying. I have had numerous clients who were very afraid to speak up in a group. They tended to be fine one-on-one or with a few others, but not in larger groups. In the case of one woman, whenever she or her siblings spoke up as children, they got slapped hard in the face and were told to shut up. This is how subconscious beliefs get so deeply rooted. For her, staying quiet and out of trouble was imperative. It wasn’t safe to speak up. That fear has remained with her. As an adult, she was still afraid and anxious to speak up, especially in a professional setting. When a fear is this strong and prevalent, you can be sure it’s part of what you have come in to experience and learn in this lifetime.

With another client, he was afraid to speak up because life was very confusing for him and he was afraid he would add to his mother’s sadness concerning another sibling. He remembered one time when he said what was on his mind, his mother became quite distressed and he didn’t understand why. So he made the decision to remain silent in order not to upset her ever again.

I also find this fear of speaking up prevalent in people from alcoholic families. If one of the parents was drunk, the children didn’t want to do or say anything to set that parent off onto a tirade. The fear kept these children paralyzed, silent, still. They didn’t want to get hit or in trouble by saying or doing the slightest “wrong” thing. They quickly learned that peace in the household depended on their being quiet. Their learned response translates into the adult behaviors of not being able to speak up for oneself, especially with authority figures (such as at work), or around men (or women), depending on which parent was the alcoholic. They still fear they will get in trouble if they speak up.

The Positive Intent of “I Can’t Speak Up” was similar to the limiting beliefs of *I’m stuck* and *I’m alone*. Some children took on *I can’t speak up* to protect themselves or others from harm. It was a survival belief, and the child might have had a very good reason for adhering to it. You may continue to create situations in which you don’t feel safe speaking up, so the belief can continue to look and feel valid to you. Here’s what’s true though: You are not five years old any longer, and you can speak from your authentic voice, which others will listen to and respect.

“I Don’t Matter....I’m Not Worthy”

I’ve noticed that quite often, along with the above belief of *I don’t belong*, the belief *I don’t matter* forms when a baby is born and the former youngest child – age two, three or four years old – feels displaced. This older sibling is no longer the main attraction, the one getting the special attention, the one held on mother’s lap, or the one whom the grandparents go to first. Suddenly, there’s someone “more special” in the home, which the older child translates into feeling less than, not needed, superfluous.

One woman was three when her younger sibling was born. Her thoughts were, “*What’s wrong with me that they needed another child? I don’t matter anymore.*” This feeling of being less than, not worthy of attention, became an under-current that was always present for her, in spite of how well she did in life or how happy she might feel at times. She always felt this “truth” underneath, and would hold herself back from achieving the success she was capable of attaining.

The real truth of our journey in life is that we are all already fully worthy because we are part of Source Essence: We are an expression of God. In Christianity it’s stated, “We are the sons and daughters of the Living God.” We can’t *be* any more worthy because that’s our inherent nature.

The problem is that we can *feel* less worthy. All of our limiting beliefs simply make us feel less: less worthy, less loved, less accepted. Our journey is to realize that these “less than” beliefs are not true. In truth, we are spiritual beings in physical bodies, fully worthy.

The Positive Intent of “I Don’t Matter” was the opposite of what actually occurred. As a child, if we told ourselves, *I don’t matter*, then we thought it wouldn’t hurt so badly when we felt ignored or less important than our younger sibling.

By now I’m sure you’re seeing a theme with all of these positive intents. The child’s mind takes on these beliefs to circumvent pain, loss, or feeling not safe. The limiting belief is meant to somehow protect against feeling unloved or unsafe. The thinking goes further: If we are unloved, then perhaps we’ll be thrown out of the family or no one will take care of us... and we’ll die. It is this unspoken and underlying threat of dying that keeps so many of these limiting beliefs intact into adulthood, hidden from our conscious mind.

“I Can’t Do It Right”

This also shows up in one’s life as *I never get what I want* or *it never works out for me*. I’ve had clients brought to deep and sudden sadness when this belief is triggered. They’re attempting to access some information in a session and then “wham!” they start crying, “See, I can’t do anything right. It never works out for me!” They are instantly in despair and hopelessness.

They’ve accessed a belief they acquired quite young, often in the toddler or preschool years. This belief can begin when a young child is intent on coloring in a coloring book but can’t seem to stay inside the lines of the drawing. An adult may correct the child, explaining that in order to color correctly, they need to keep their crayon marks inside the lines of the pre-drawn objects. It’s such a small incident, but that’s enough for the child to despair inside, deciding, *I can’t do it right*. That can be the beginning of a lifelong pattern of frustration as they live out the experiences of this belief.

I had one client who, when she was a child, was told she could have one special toy of her choice while on vacation. She chose a toy that she liked. However, the next day, in a store window, she saw the doll of her dreams. But it was too late. She’d already chosen her one toy. She didn’t get to have her dream doll.

This experience made such a deep impression on her that she could easily remember the incident vividly when I worked with her. She formed two companion beliefs, *I can’t do it right* (choosing the wrong toy) and *I don’t get what I want* (dream doll), and the combination of these two beliefs created *it never works out for me*.

She relived these beliefs over and over throughout her life, each time adding more credence to their “truth” in her life. The sad part is: none of them was true to begin with. Just because she found a toy more to her liking the next day didn’t mean she hadn’t chosen her first toy well. Based on what she knew of the toys available that day, she had made a good decision. But her desire for her dream doll

made the *I can't do it right* experience “stick” in her programming and take over as “the law” of how her life would be from that day forward.

The Positive Intent of “I Can't Do It Right” was (1) to remind the child to try harder to get it right the first time, and then (2) to help alleviate the feelings of despair and low self-worth when they made a mistake. But this positive intent won't lead to the desired positive outcome because these two intents work against each other. The first intent: *If I know I'm not going to do it right, then I'll work harder* might lead the child to do something right the first time, yes. However, lurking behind this positive intent is the second intent: *If I do mess up, it won't hurt as badly because I'll be expecting it*, which sabotages the first positive intent by trying to cushion the blow of not being right the first time. There won't be the sudden surprise and disappointment that comes from expecting things to *not* work out. The child's thinking is: expecting the undesired outcome helps lessen the pain. None of this is true, of course. But it's still quite common thinking from a child's point of view.

“I Need to Be in Control”

You may have grown up in a critical household and made the decision to never be like that because it was so hurtful. As the child, you likely formed beliefs that people are critical, or that being critical is a natural response in life. Your conscious decision to not criticize others may not release your original critical belief; so instead, you turn your beliefs against yourself. You become highly self-critical, perfectionist, believing you never do things well enough, over-achieving so you won't make any mistakes, and so on.

On a subconscious level, you likely combine several beliefs – such as being critical, not good enough, and not smart enough – thus making these combined beliefs even more powerful and even more limiting.

These intertwined limiting beliefs become a dominant paradigm for how you show up in the world. And all the while, you pride yourself on not criticizing others verbally. Isn't that ironic how we can think one thing yet do the opposite?

If you believe you do not *verbally* criticize others, look to see how much you *mentally* criticize them. The extent to which you react to others who are critical likely matches the extent to which you are critical within – of yourself and others. Even when you're not the same as your parents, some of the conditions from your childhood unconsciously remain part of you *until* you become conscious of them and then change them.

If you grew up in a household in which your mother was very controlling, you could have taken on any of the following beliefs (and relationships):

- *Being controlling is how I can get what I want.* With this belief, you can end up being like your mother in your own familial relationships.
- *I never want to be controlling, to not have that sort of power play in my relationships.* You may therefore become a people pleaser or a doormat – that is, you don't speak up for what you really want.
- *I'm going to control myself.* With this belief, you may become the perfectionist in the family, making sure your spouse and children are always doing exactly the right thing and looking exactly the right way.

The Positive Intent of “I Need to Be in Control” was to make sense of the chaos around you or the feeling of helplessness. As a child, if you could bring control into your life, as least according to the way you thought about life, then it wouldn't be so chaotic or unsafe. The need to have everything *perfect*, absolutely perfect, brought a feeling of safety and security because you would know what to expect.

None of the unexpected surprises or behaviors of others in your family could catch you off guard or harm you. Being in control, having a sense of extreme order, meant that you could feel safe.

“I’ve Been Abused”

If you experienced or witnessed abuse in childhood, your resulting beliefs will eventually show up in your relationships. If you were sexually abused as a child, for example, and haven’t done enough healing work to release the beliefs and negative energy caused by that abuse, then you will recreate being abused in some way or you may actually become the abuser in adult relationships.

Interestingly, such abuse doesn’t always show up as aggressive. It can be subtle abuse, such as the misuse of sex and intimacy. For example, your relationships may lack intimacy on any real or sustained level – which can show up in opposing ways. You may, for instance, become involved with someone who doesn’t want to have sex. Or, opposite that, you may find yourself involved with a sex addict. Either way, you lack intimacy and deep connection.

On the other hand, you may be the one who doesn’t want to have sex, even though your partner desires it. You may think you want it, yet you find yourself withdrawing from sexual relationships for longer and longer periods of time. Or you may be a sex addict and desire many partners, and yet can’t really be intimate in any of them, especially in your primary relationship. The sex is unsatisfying, the emotional emptiness inside doesn’t get filled up, so you are driven to have more partners. Your limiting belief around sex can also take the form of pornography, spending hours and hours on Internet porn sites, watching porn DVDs, buying adult magazines, or frequenting stripper bars.

Sexual abuse in childhood, whether it was just once or countless times over a period of years, and whether it was by someone you knew or a complete stranger, will have lifelong consequences – unless and until you acknowledge it and work on it therapeutically to release or balance the emotions and beliefs it caused that are still trapped in your belief system.

The myriad of beliefs taken on as a result of childhood abuse is insidious because they strike at your very core: your self-concept and safety in the world.

- If the abuse came from a family member or friend, you may have formed beliefs around betrayal and not being able to trust those you should be able to trust. You can form the belief, *Those who love me, hurt me*. You may believe that, fundamentally, the world is not a safe place for you.
- If an adult abused you when you were three or four years old, you didn’t have physical power, mental power, or emotional power. You were just a small child caught in a situation with very few resources. You may have taken on the belief *I am powerless*, which is a common theme among those who have been abused because it was true at the time of the abuse.
- If you were threatened with silence, then you had a double dose of not feeling safe: It was not safe to speak up, and in not speaking up, the abuse was allowed to continue.

The Positive Intent of “I’ve Been Abused” could have been protection, to resolve to “never let this happen to me again.” The belief was meant to lead a person out of feeling and acting like a victim and into being self-reliant and no longer abused. But this belief could also have been meant as a cry for help from the child, to let a safe adult know that something has happened that requires adult aid. Remember, this is all from the young child’s perspective. There wasn’t a lot of consciousness going on in the mind of the child, just the knowledge “this is what happened.” As a result, the belief is a reflection of the child’s external circumstances, with the mind taking on the thinking of *this is how life is for me: I’ve been abused*.

This belief can be difficult to even imagine connecting to a positive intent because it's such absolutely unacceptable behavior. But it is the child's thoughts about the behavior that are meant to somehow help the child. By knowing that they are abused, the child can make plans to avoid the abuser, if possible, or as with so many of the beliefs described, prepare himself or herself for living life that includes more abuse.

“Life Isn't Fair”

I've found that many times clients form the belief that *Life isn't fair* because they had older siblings who got to stay up later than they did. As children, this is how life can look to us: Life isn't fair. This belief can become a central theme in our life, even though we do a tremendous amount of self-healing.

We may not even see this belief in ourselves because it's such a foundational belief. To us, it just is. We look around at our life and see all the things that aren't fair. We may take on a victim mentality and think that life is doing *to* us. Or we may take on the warrior mentality and know that we can move through all the blocks and obstacles that life throws our way. Either way, the real cause is the underlying paradigm: *Life isn't fair*.

So if *Life isn't fair* is your belief, think of all the unfair circumstances you perceive having occurred in your life. You don't necessarily create unfair circumstances, but difficult or challenging situations will show up in your life that you perceive as unfair. Or you may simply perceive a neutral event as being unfair to you. Life is happening and you are putting your own meaning to it. You call something unfair, while a friend who doesn't have that belief system calls it “just life” with no judgment on it. Notice if this happens. Are you caught in the negative emotions and energy of “unfair” while your friend remains neutral? That's a clue that you have this subconscious limiting belief.

The Positive Intent of “Life Isn't Fair” was for a child to know what to expect in life, and then to choose either to accept it or try to change it. On the one hand, the positive intent could have been to motivate children to create more fairness in their life. At a young age, they may have become very vocal about what seemed not right and fair, and demand equality with their siblings, for instance. On the other hand, this belief could have led children to give in to life and simply accept the inequality, not demand or require it to be fair. Children could have gone either direction with this belief to prepare themselves for life.

“I'm Powerless”

The truth is that when we are young children, we are actually quite powerless. We don't have physical size or strength on our side, we're too young to have full reasoning capabilities, and we don't have emotional maturity. Even though we may have felt and actually been powerless as a child, that belief system was never meant to be the blueprint for the rest of our life. It was what happened years ago. It was true then, but not now.

The way our brain works is: When our beliefs, feelings, and physical sensations get recorded, they suspend intact in that moment. Later, whenever that belief, *I am powerless*, is reactivated, the energy of that original situation floods through our mind, body, emotions, chemistry, and we again *feel* absolutely powerless – and we believe we truly *are* powerless. The original event may have happened years ago, but if we have not updated that belief, in our powerlessness, our body experiences it countless times over the ensuing years.

The truth is: You are *not* powerless. Period. Your thinking makes you feel and act powerless, but that doesn't mean you actually *are* powerless. It only means you *feel* and *act* powerless. But, since you are no longer that child, you have the ability to make different choices.

Look at your day and notice all the choices you made, from the moment you woke up until you went to sleep at night. Your day was filled with choices. You have the power to make choices. You chose what to wear, you chose to go to work, you chose what to eat for lunch, you chose how you responded to others throughout the day, and you chose how to spend your evening. Listen inside and see if you are saying to yourself, “NO, I didn’t choose any of that. It was all forced. I didn’t want to do any of it.” Thinking you didn’t choose any of it, or knowing you chose it all, either way shows you have the power to choose how you see your life.

I’m powerless is simply two words. It’s a thought, two words, filled with energy, emotion, and physical sensations. You believe it to be true and so you live it out, finding yourself in situations and challenges where you can’t see a way to be in charge. You believe you are powerless, and when life reflects that back to you, you defend it, you live it.

I’m powerful is also simply two words. For you, however, that statement may lack the emotion and the feeling of truth because you filter that thought through the more emotionally charged negative opposite, *I am powerless*. So it doesn’t feel true and you don’t live it out. You don’t see any options – except to act powerless – in challenging situations.

The Positive Intent of “I’m powerless” was often meant to keep you safe, so that you didn’t fight back against the bigger powers in your life, your parents, other adults or older siblings. It was also meant to help you accept being disappointed and not getting your own way. If you knew that you were powerless to make things happen the way you wanted, it wouldn’t be such a surprise or hurt as much when that occurred again and again.

As an adult, this belief can lead you into the truth of your internal power because you can get so tired of feeling powerless that you break through that belief. It can motivate you to become the powerful Being that you actually are.

Hangin’ on for Dear Life

The Buddha tells a parable of a man walking a high road who sees a great river, its near bank dangerous and frightening, while its far bank appears safe. The man collects sticks and foliage, makes a raft and paddles across the river, safely reaching the other shore. After reaching the safe shore, he then takes the raft and puts it on his head and walks with it wherever he goes. It’s not something he needs, but the raft helped him get across the river, so he hangs onto it.

This parable demonstrates what I’ve been writing about with all of the positive intents of the limiting beliefs. You can see that we hang onto them because they were originally meant to help us, regardless of the impacts they now have on our adult life. We also hold onto false beliefs because we believed they kept us safe as a child.

Our habitual beliefs also stay in place because they are familiar. We know the world according to our perceptions. So even if these perceptions destroy the quality of our life, we still consider them “comfortable” because we have always lived through them. We may not know who we would be without this way of being, even though we want it to be gone.

We may also hold onto outdated beliefs out of loyalty to our family. For instance, “*I’ll be letting my father down by letting go of this belief,*” or “*Something bad will happen to my mother if I speak the truth,*” or “*It’s not OK to earn more money or be more successful than my parents.*” You may even feel as though you keep someone else alive or happy because of a limiting belief you embrace.

You Made It All Up

Think of all of these limiting beliefs and their opposite empowering beliefs as hungry wolves within you. Which ones will win out and rule you in the moment? That all depends on which ones you feed. You, and you alone, decide which beliefs you will feed and nourish: those that constrict you or those that empower you.

With all the limiting beliefs just discussed and the thousands of others that constrict or empower you, it's important to remember one thing:

You made them all up.

An event occurred. You made up the meaning of the event. You turned it into a belief. And then you generalized it to the rest of your life. The original event was neutral facts – you or someone else said or did something, or something happened. You gave that event meaning. You put judgments on it, and you had thoughts about what that meant about you and others. You were flooded with emotions and feelings. And it all became intertwined and recorded in your brain. You have experienced this belief ever since as though it is the Truth.

That's often a tough pill to swallow, but the good news is:

You can make up something else.

Empowering Thoughts

- Originally, we saw each belief as a solution to a problem.
- *I'm not good enough* is a lie, just as are all the other limiting beliefs.
- The *only thing* that is actually true is that you have a *belief* that you were abandoned.
- You, the Soul of who you are, are Love. At your core, you are perfect.
- “If that happens, my God and I will handle it.”
- Your thinking makes you feel and act powerless, but that doesn't mean you actually *are* powerless.

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